

Message Text

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EB-11 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 CIEP-02 STR-08

TRSE-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 IO-13 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 RSR-01 /181 W

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R 161902Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2585

AMEMBASSY BONN

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PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON

SUBJECT: UK MINAG GODBER REPLIES TO CHIRAC

REF: PARIS 21850

SUMMARY: LE FIGARO ON AUGUST 16 CARRIED A LENGTHY INTERVIEW OF BRITISH MINAG GODBER BY ITS CHIEF AGRICULTURAL WRITER JEAN DOMENGE. A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL, ALSO BY DOMENGE, SUPPLEMENTED THE INTERVIEW. GODBER CAME THROUGH AS DIPLOMATIC AND CONCILIATORY REGARDING FRENCH MINAG CHIRAC'S NOW FAMOUS RECENT REMARKS TO THE FRENCH WEEKLY, LE POINT. DOMENGE'S EDITORIAL EXPRESSED ADMIRATION FOR GODBER'S AGREEABLE BUT FIRM RIPOSTE TO CHIRAC'S BOMBAST AND CRITISED CHIRAC FOR HIS INTEMPERANCE.

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1. LE FIGARO PUBLISHED IN ITS THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, EDITION AN INTERVIEW WITH BRITISH MINAG GODBER CONDUCTED BY JEAN DOMENGE, THE PRINCIPAL AGRICULTURAL WRITER FOR LE FIGARO. IN THIS INTERVIEW GODBER REPLIED IN DEPTH TO THE REMARKS OF FRENCH MINAG CHIRAC, PUBLISHED IN LE POINT, WHICH HAVE NOW BECOME A CAUSE CELEBRE. ALSO IN THIS EDITION WAS A PROVOCATIVE FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL BY DOMENGE.

2. IN THE EDITORIAL DOMENGE CHARACTERIZED GODBER'S RESPONSES IN THE INTERVIEW AS IMPASSIVE IN THE TRADITIONAL BRITISH MANNER BUT NONETHELESS EFFECTIVE.

3. DOMENGE COMMENTED IN AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY CRITICAL TONE ON THE ATTACKS HE CLAIMED CHIRAC HAD LEVELED ON ALL FRANCE'S EC PARTNERS SAVE DENMARK, IRELAND, BELGIUM, AND LUXEMBOURG. (DOMENGE IS BETTER KNOWN FOR HIS ATTACKS ON US POLICIES RATHER THAN ON FRENCH ONES.) ACCORDING TO DEMENGE, CHIRAC HAS CREATED A REGRETTABLE ATMOSPHERE IN THE EC. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT NEVER SINCE THE TREATY OF ROME SIGNING HAVE SUCH PERSONAL ATTACKS BEEN MADE, NOR HAS FRANCE BEEN SO ALONE IN THE AGRICULTURAL AREA.

4. DOMENGE CONTINUED THAT THE CAP WILL NEVER BE WHAT IT WAS AND FRANCE WILL NO LONGER BE THE BIG WINNER IT HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW. THUS, DOMENGE BELIEVES, CHIRAC'S SUDDEN WHINS ARE MOSTLY INTENDED FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION. FUTHERMORE, IT IS DOMENGE'S OPINION THAT FRENCH MORALE MUST BE PREPARED FOR THESE CHANGES AND IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT CHIRAC'S EFFORTS TO GET CLOSE TO AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE CONSIDERED. IN CONCLUSION DOMENGE STATED THAT IN THE EVENT OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE CHIRAC WOULD BE PLEASED TO BE RELIEVED OF HIS PRESENT "HORNET'S NEST"

5. DETAILS ON THE INSIDE PAGE INTERVIEW FOLLOW: ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSITION THAT THE UK'S CRITICISM OF THE CAP REINFORCED THE CONTENTION THAT THE UK HAD ENTERED THE EC TO TORPEDO IT, GODBER EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND STATED THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE UK HAD PLAYED AN ACTIVE AND IMPORTANT ROLE IN BREAKING THROUGH THE IMPASSE IN THE DISCUSSION OF AGRICULTURAL PRICES LAST APRIL.

6. DEFENDING THE UK POSITION REGARDING CAP REFORM, GODBER SAID HIS GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED ALL ITS FUNDAMENTAL PRICIPLES BUT THE UNCLASSIFIED

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CAP COULD BE IMPROVED IN CERTAIN ASPECTS. FURTHERMORE, ACCORDING TO GODBER, THE UK'S SUGGESTIONS HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE EC COMMISSION FOR STUDY IN OCTOBER.

7. RIPOSTING TO THE QUESTION WHETHER THE UK WAS GOING TO BLOCK NEW INCREASES IN AGRICULTURAL PRICES DUE TO DISPOSITION TO DEFEND CONSUMER INTERESTS MORE THAN THOSE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS, GODBER DENIED THE UK'S UNIQUE CONCERN WITH CONSUMERS AND

DECLARED THE UK'S ESSENTIAL INTERESTS WAS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY
BRITISH AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. HE ADDED THAT, HOWEVER, INFLATION
POSED AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM WHICH ALSO EFFECTED OTHER COUNTRIES.
IN GODBER'S VIEW THIS PROBLEM WAS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY THE NEED
FOR UK PRICES TO RISE IN ORDER TO CATCH UP WITH THOSE OF THE EC.

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L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 RSR-01 /181 W

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8. GODBERG DODGED THE QUESTION OF BY WHAT MEANS HE ENVISAGED
ASSURING A REASONABLE STANDARD OF LIVING FOR EUROPEAN SMALL
FARMERS BY STATING LARGE EFFICIENT HOLDINGS EXISTED IN FRANCE
AS WELL AS THE UK. SMALL
PRODUCERS COULD BE AIDED -- AS THEY WERE IN THE UK -- WITHOUT
PRICE INCREASES. HE DID NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION PUT FORTH
BY DOMENGE THAT AGRICULTURE IS OF AN "ARTISANAL" TYPE EVERYWHERE
EXCEPT IN THE UK.

9. REPLYING DIRECTLY TO CHIRAC'S ALLEGATIONS RE EC SUGAR POLICY
(PARA 1 REFTEL), GODBER STATED FRANCE ALONE OF THE 9 DISAVORED

THE COMMISSION MEMORANDUM WHICH ALLOWED IMPORTATION OF ,14000,000 TONS FROM THE LDC'S IN THE COMMONWEALTH. HE LAID THE PROBLEM OF SURPLUS TO EUROPEAN OVERPRODUCTION AND STATED BRITISH PRODUCERS WOULD BEAR THE BRUNT OF CUTBACKS IN ORDER TO MAKE WAY FOR COMMON-WEALTH

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IMPORTATION.

10. CHIRAC CHARGED THE UK WITH EXTRAORDINARY BAD FAITH IN PREFERRING TO IMPORT SUGAR CANE AT LOW PRICES RATHER THAN UTILIZING EUROPEAN SUGAR BEST PRODUCTION. GODBER FOUND THIS VIEWPOINT UNACCEPTABLE, STATING IF THE PRICE OF SUGAR CANE SHOULD BE RAISED THE QUESTION COULD BE DISCUSSED IN BRUSSELS AND,FURTHERMORE, THE SUGAR QUESTION HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT GREAT LENGTH BEFORE THE UK'S EC ENTRY.

11. GODBER DEFENDED THE PROFIT MARGINS OF THE BRITISH SUGAR TRUST TATE AND LYLE -- WHICH CHIRAC HAD SINGLED OUT FOR ATTACK -- BY STATING THEY RESULTED FROM SPECIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN HMG AND THE REFINERIES. HE ADDED THAT THE MARGINS WOULD COME IN LINE WITH THE LOWER ONES OF THE EC IN 1975. GODBER SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR CHIRAC'S SUPPORT ON THE SUBJECT OF SUGAR WHICH CHIRAC REALIZED CONSTITUTED A SHORT TERM PROBLEM

12. QUERIED ON HIS VIEWS COMMODITY SHORTAGES DUE TO SPECULATION AND MASSIVE COMMUNIST PURCHASES, GODBER RESPONDED THAT HE AGREED WITH CHIRAC AND POMPIDOU -- THAT WE ARE ENTERING APERIOD OF SHORTAGES, THOUGH GODBER WOULD NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO THIS POSITION FOR THE LONG TERM. IN HIS VIEW THE SOLUTION WAS TO SELECTIVELY INCREASE EUROPEAN PRODUCTION, AVOIDING OVERPRODUCTION SUCH AS HAD OCCURRED WITH BUTTER.

13. GODBER CONCLUDED THE INTERVIEW ON A POSSIBLE NOTE OF AMITY, EMPHASIZING THAT THE ENTENTE CORDIALE WAS AS STRONG AS EVER, AND HE CONSIDERED CHIRAC A GOOD FRIEND WHOSE GOALS WERE IDENTICAL TO HIS OWN.

14. COMMENT: IN GENERAL, GODBER RESPONSES WERE MODERATE AND CONCILIATORY IN TONE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DID NOT HESITATE TO STATE HIS POSITION FIRMLY WHEN HE BELIEVED HIS VIEWS WERE BEING MISREPRESENTED EITHER BY CHIRAC OR BY DOMENGE IN HIS FORMULATION OF THE QUESTIONS.STONE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PARIS22081
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730834/aaaaayqq.tel
Line Count: 215
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: PARIS 21850
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kellerpr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <15-Jan-2002 by kellerpr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UK MINAG GODBER REPLIES TO CHIRAC
TAGS: ECON
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005